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A
PHILOSOPHICAL ENDEAVOUR

Towards the *Defence* of the Being

OF

WITCHES

AND

APPARITIONS.

In

A LETTER

To the much *Honoured*,

ROBERT HUNT, Esq;

By a Member of

THE ROYAL SOCIETY

LONDON,

Printed by J. Grismond for James Collins, at the
King's Arms in Ivy-Lane, 1666.

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Some
CONSIDERATIONS
About
WITCHCRAFT,

In
*A Letter to the much Honour'd, Robert Hunt
Esquire.*

S I R,



HE late and frequent dealings
you have had in the *Exami-
nation of Witches*, and the Re-
gards of one that hath a
very particular and deserved
Honour for you, have
brought you the trouble of some *Considera-
tions* upon the *subject*, in which you have so
critically convers'd, that perhaps may suggest
to your better thoughts, a way of accounting
for some of those strange things you have
been a witness of; and contribute to the *De-
fence* of the Truth of Matters which you
B know

know by *Experiments* that could not deceive, against the little exceptions of those that are resolved to believe nothing in affairs of this nature.

If any thing were to be much *admired* in an *Age of Wonders*, not onely of *Nature* (which is a constant *Prodigy*) but of *Men* and *Manners*; it would be to me matter of *Astonishment*, that *Men*, otherwise witty and ingenious, are fall'n into the conceit that there's no such thing as a *Witch* or *Apparition*, but that these are the creatures of *Melancholy* and *Superstition*, foster'd by *ignorance* and *design*; which, comparing the confidence of their *disbelief* with the evidence of the things denied, and the *weakness* of their grounds, would almost suggest, that themselves are an *argument* of what they deny: and that so confident an *Opinion* could not be held upon such inducements, but by some kind of *Witchcraft* and *Fascination* in the *Fancy*. And perhaps that *evil Spirit*, whose influences they will not allow in *Actions* ascribed to such Causes, hath a greater hand and interest in their *Proposition* then they are aware of. For that subtil *Enemy* of Mankind (since *Providence* will not permit him to mischief us without our own concurrence) attempts that by *stratagem* and *artifice*, which he could never

ver effect by open ways of acting; and the success of all wiles depending upon their secrecy and concealment, his influence is never more dangerous then when his agency is least suspected. In order therefore to the carrying on the dark and hidden designs he manageth against our Happiness, and our Souls, he cannot expect to advantage himself more, then by insinuating a belief, *That there is no such thing as himself*, but that fear and fancy make Devils now, as they did Gods of old. Nor can he ever draw the assent of men to so dangerous an assertion, while the standing sensible evidences of his existence in his practices by and upon his Instruments are not discredited and removed.

'Tis doubtless therefore the interest of this Agent of darkness to have the world believe, that the notion they have of him is but a phantasm and conceit; and in order thereunto,

That the stories of Witches, Apparitions, and indeed every thing that brings tidings of another world, are but melancholick Dreams and pious Romances. And when men are arriv'd thus far, to think there are no diabolical contracts or apparitions, their belief that there are such Spirits, rests onely upon their Faith and Reverence to the Divine Oracles, which

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we have little reason to apprehend so great in such assertors, as to command much from their assent, especially in such things in which they have *corrupt interests* against their evidence. So that he that thinks there is no *Witch*, believes a *Devil gratis*, or at least upon such inducements which he is like to find himself disposed to deny when he pleaseth. And when men are arrived to this degree of *diffidence* and *infidelity*, we are beholden to them if they believe either *Angel* or *Spirit*, *Resurrection* of the *Body*, or *Immortality* of *Souls*. These things hang together in a *Chain of connexion*, at least in these mens *Hypothesis*; and 'tis but an happy chance if he that hath lost *one link* hold another. So that the vitals of Religion being so much interressed in this subject, it will not be impertinent particularly to discourse it.

And in order to the proof that there have been, and are *unlawful confederacies* with *evil spirits*, by vertue of which the *hellish accomplices* perform things above their natural powers; I must premise, that this being *matter of Fact*, is onely capable of the evidence of *authority* and *sense*: And by both these, the being of *Witches* and *diabolical contracts*, is most abundantly confirm'd. All *Histories* are full

full of the exploits of those Instruments of darkness, and the testimony of all Ages, not only of the rude and barbarous, but of the most civiliz'd and polish'd world, brings tidings of their strange performances. We have the attestation of thousands of eye and ear-witnesses, and those not of the easily deceivable vulgar only, but of wise and grave discerners, and that when no interest could oblige them to agree together in a common Lie: I say, we have the light of all these circumstances to confirm us in the belief of things done by persons of despicable power and knowledge, beyond the reach of Art and ordinary Nature; standing publick Records have been kept of these well attested Relations, and Epochas made of those unwonted events. Laws in many Nations have been enacted against those vile practises; those among the Jews and our own are notorious; such cases have been often determined near us, by wise and reverend Judges, upon clear and convictive evidence: and thousands in our own Nation have suffered death for their vile compacts with apostate spirits. All these I might largely prove in their particular instances, but that 'tis not needful, since those that deny the being of Witches, do it not out of ignorance of these
Heads

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Heads of Argument, of which probably they have heard a thousand times, but from an apprehension that such a belief is absurd, and the things impossible. And upon these presumptions they condemn all demonstrations of this nature, and are hardned against conviction. And I think, those that can believe all *Histories* are *Romances*, that all the *wiser* world have agreed together to juggle mankind into a common belief of *ungrounded fables*, that the *sound senses* of multitudes together may deceive them, and *Laws* are built upon *Chymera's*; that the *gravest* and *wisest* Judges have been *Murderers*, and the *sagest* persons *Fools*, or *designing Impostors*: I say, those that can believe this heap of absurdities, are either more *credulous* then those whose credulity they reprehend, or else have some extraordinary evidence of their persuasion, viz. That 'tis absurd and impossible there should be a Witch or Apparition. And I am confident, were those little appearances remov'd, which men have form'd in their fancies against the belief of such things, their evidence would make its way to their assent, without any more arguments then what they know already to enforce it. There is nothing then necessary to be done, in order to the establishing the belief I would
reconcile

reconcile to men's minds, but to endeavour the removal of those prejudices they have received against it, the chief of which I shall particularly deal with; and I begin with that *bold Assertion*, That

(1) *The notion of a Spirit is impossible and contradictory, and consequently so is that of Witches, the belief of which is founded on that Doctrin.*

To which *Objection* I answer, (1) If the notion of a Spirit be so *absurd* as is pretended, that of a God, and a Soul, distinct from matter and immortal, is likewise an *absurdity*. And then that the world was jumbled into this *elegant and orderly Fabrick* by chance; and that our Souls are onely parts of Matter, that came together we know not *whence*, nor *how*; and shall again shortly be *dissolv'd* into those loose Atoms that compound them; That all our conceptions are but the *thrusting* of one part of matter against another; and the *Idea's* of our minds meer *blind and casual motions*; These and a thousand more the grossest *impossibilities and absurdities*, consequents of this Proposition, That the notion of a Spirit is *absurd*, will be *sad certainties and demonstrations*. And with
such

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such Assertors I would cease to discourse about *Witches* and *Apparitions*, and address my self to obtain their assent to truths infinitely more Sacred.

And yet (2) though it should be granted them, that a *substance immaterial* is as much a contradiction as they can fancy; yet the *Air* and all the *Regions* above us may have their *invisible intellectual Agents*, of nature like unto our *Souls*, be that what it will; and some of them at least as much *degenerate* as the vilest and most *mischievous* among *Men*. This, I say, may reasonably enough be supposed, though, as I intimated above, the *Atheist* hath another *chain of consequences*. And this *Hypothesis* will be enough to secure the *possibility* of *Witches* and *Apparitions*: and that all the *upper Stories* of the *Universe* are furnish'd with *Inhabitants*, 'tis infinitely reasonable to conclude from the *analogy* of *Nature*: Since we see there is nothing so contemptible and vile in the world we reside in, but hath its living creatures that dwell upon it; the *Earth*, the *Water*, the *inferiour Air*; the *Bodies* of *Animals*, the *flesh*, the *skin*, the *entrails*; the *leaves*, the *roots*, the *stalks* of *Vegetables*; yea and all kind of *Minerals* in the *subterraneous Regions*: I say, all these have their *proper Inhabitants*; yea, I suppose

suppose this Rule may hold in all distinct kinds of bodies in the world, That they have their *peculiar Animals*. The certainty of which I believe the improvement of *microscopical observations* will discover. From whence I infer, That since this little *spot* is so *thickly peopled* in every *Atom* of it, 'tis weakness to think that all the *vast spaces* above, and *hollows* under ground, are *desert* and *uninhabited*. And if both the *superiour* and *lower Continents* of the *Universe* have their inhabitants also, 'tis exceedingly *improbable*, arguing from the same *analogy*, that they are all of the *meer sensible nature*, but that there are at least some of the *Rational* and *Intellectual Orders*. Which supposed, there is good foundation for the belief of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, though the *notion* of a *Spirit* should prove *absurd* and *unphilosophical*. And so this first *Objection* comes to nothing. I descend then to the second *Prejudice*, which may be thus formed in behalf of the *Objectors*.

(2) *There are Actions in most of those Relations ascribed to Witches, which are ridiculous and impossible in the nature of things; such are* (1) *their flying out of windows, after they have annointed themselves, to remote places.* (2) *Their transformation into Cats, Hares, and other Creatures.* (3) *Their feeling all the hurts in their own*

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bodies

bodies which they have received in these. (4) Their raising Tempests, by muttering some nonsensical words, or performing some little ridiculous ceremonies. And (5) their being suck'd in a certain private place of their bodies by a Familiar. These are presumed to be actions inconsistent with the nature of Spirits, and above the powers of those poor and miserable Agents. And therefore the Objection supposeth them performed only by the fancy; and that the whole mystery of Witchcraft is but an illusion of crasie imagination.

But to this Objection I return, (1) in the general, The more absurd and unaccountable these actions seem, the greater confirmations are they to me of the truth of those Relations, and the reality of what the Objectors would destroy. For these circumstances being exceeding unlikely, judging by the measures of common belief, 'tis the greater probability they are not fictitious; For the contrivers of Fictions use to form them as near as they can conformably to the most unsuspected realities, endeavouring to make them look as like truth as is possible in the main supposals, though withall they make them strange in the circumstance. None but a fool or mad-man would relate with a purpose of having it believed, that he saw in Ireland, Men with hoofs on their heads, and eyes in their posteriors;

riors; or, if any should be so ridiculously vain, as to be serious in such an incredible Romance, it cannot be supposed that all Travellers that come into those parts after him should tell the same story. There is large field in fiction; and if all those Relations were arbitrary compositions, doubtless the first Romancers would have framed them more agreeable to the common doctrine of Spirits; at least, after these supposed absurdities had been a thousand times laugh'd at, people by this time would have learn'd to correct those obnoxious extravagancies; and though they have not yet more veracity than the Ages of Ignorance and Superstition, yet one would expect they should have got more cunning. This suppos'd impossibility then of these performances, seems to me a probable argument that they are not wilfull and disigned forgeries. And if they are Phancies, 'tis somewhat strange that *Imagination* which is the most various thing in all the world, should infinitely repeat the same conceit in all times and places.

But again (2) the strange Actions related of Witches, and presumed impossible, are not ascribed to their own powers; but to the Agency of those wicked Confederates they imploy: And to affirm that those evil spirits cannot do that which we conceit impossible, is boldly to stint

the powers of Creatures, whose natures and faculties we know not, and to measure the world of spirits by the narrow rules of our own impotent beings. We see among our selves the performances of some out-go the conceits and possibilities of others; and we know many things may be done by the *Mathematicks*, and *Mechanick Artifice*, which common heads think impossible to be effected by the honest ways of *Art and Nature*. And doubtless the subtilties and powers of those mischievous Fiends are as much beyond the reach and activities of the most knowing Agents among us, as theirs are beyond the wit and ability of the most rustic and illiterate; So that the utmost that any man's reason in the world can amount to in this particular, is onely this, that he cannot conceive how such things can be performed; which onely argues the weakness and imperfection of our knowledge and apprehensions, not the impossibility of those performances; and we can no more from hence form an Argument against them, then against the most ordinary effects in Nature. We cannot conceive how the *Fetus* is form'd in the womb, nor as much as how a *Plant* springs from the *Earth* we tread on; we know not how our Souls move the *Body*, nor how these distant and extreme

extreme natures are united; And if we are ignorant of the most obvious things about us, and the most considerable within our selves, 'tis then no wonder that we know not the constitution and powers of the Creatures, to whom we are such Strangers. Briefly then, matters of fact well proved ought not to be denied, because we cannot conceive how they can be perform'd. Nor is it a reasonable method of inference, first to presume the thing impossible, and thence to conclude that the fact cannot be proved. On the contrary, we should judge of the action by the evidence, and not the evidence by the measures of our fancies about the action. This is proudly to exalt our own opinions above the clearest testimonies, and most sensible demonstrations of fact: and so to give the Lie to all Mankind, rather then distrust the little conceits of our bold imaginations. But yet further,

(3.) I think there is nothing in the instances mention'd, but what may as well be accounted for the Rules of Reason and Philosophy as the ordinary affairs of Nature. For in resolving natural Phenomena, we can only assign the probable causes, shewing how things may be, not presuming how they are. And in the particulars under our *Examen*, we may
give

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give an account how 'tis possible, and not unlikely, that such things (though somewhat varying from the common *rode* of *Nature*) may be acted. And if our narrow and contracted minds can furnish us with apprehensions of the way and manner of such performances, though perhaps not the true ones, 'tis an argument that such things may be effected by creatures, whose powers and knowledge are so vastly exceeding ours. I shall endeavour therefore briefly to suggest some things that may render the *possibility* of these performances *conceivable*, in order to the removal of this *Objection*, that they are *contradictions* and *impossible*.

For the *First* then, That the *confederate Spirit* should transport the *Witch* through the *Air* to the place of general *Rendezvous*, there is no difficulty in conceiving; and if that be true which great Philosophers affirm concerning the real *separability* of the *Soul* from the *Body* without *death*, there is yet less; for then 'tis easie to apprehend, that the *Soul*, having left its *gross* and *sluggish Body* behind it, and being cloath'd onely with its *immediate vehicle* of *Air*, or more *subtile matter*, may be quickly conducted to any place it would be at, by those *officious Spirits* that attend it.

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And though I adventure to affirm nothing concerning the *truth* and *certainty* of this *supposition*, yet I must needs say, it doth not seem to me *unreasonable*. And our experience of *Aplexies*, *Epilepsies*, *Extasies*, and the strange things men report to have seen during those *delinquiums*, look favourably upon this *conjecture*; which seems to me to contradict no principle of *Reason* or *Philosophy*, since *Death* consists not so much in the *actual separation* of *Soul* and *Body*, as in the *indisposition* and *unfitness* of the *Body* for *vital union*, as an excellent *Philosopher* hath made good. On which *Hypothesis*, the *Witches* *annointing* her self before she takes her flight, may perhaps serve to keep the *Body* *tenantable* & in *fit disposition* to receive the *Spirit* at its return. These things, I say, we may conceive, though I affirm nothing about them; and there is nothing in such *conceptions* but what hath been affirm'd by men of worth and name, and may seem *fair* and *accountable* enough to those who judge not altogether by the measures of the *popular* and *customary opinion*. And there's a saying of a great *Apostle* that seems to countenance this *Platonick opinion*; what is the meaning else of that expression, [*Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell*] except the *Soul* may be separated from the
Body

Body without death; which if it be granted possible, 'tis sufficient for my purpose. And

(2) The *Transformations* of *Witches* into the *shapes* of other *Animals*, upon the same supposal is very conceivable, since then 'tis easie enough to imagin, that the power of imagination may form those passive and pliable vehicles into those shapes, with more ease then the fancy of the Mother can the stubborn matter of the *Fætus* in the womb, as we see it frequently doth in the instances that occur of *Signatures* and monstrous *Singularities*; And perhaps sometimes the confederate Spirit puts tricks upon the senses of the spectators, and those shapes are onely illusions.

But then (3) when they feel the hurts in their gross bodies, that they receive in their æry vehicles, they must be supposed to have been really present, at least in these latter; and 'tis no more difficult to apprehend how the hurts of those should be translated upon their other bodies, then how diseases should be inflicted by the imagination, or how the fancy of the Mother should wound the *Fætus*, as several credible relations do attest.

And (4) for their raising storms and tempests, they do it not, be sure, by their own, but by the power of the Prince of the Air, their friend and
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allie; and the Ceremonies that are injoin'd them, are doubtless nothing else but *entertainments* for their *imagination*s, and are likely design'd to persuade them, that *they* do these strange things *themselves*.

And (lastly) for their being *suck'd* by the Familiar, I say (1) we know so little of the nature of *Demons* and *Spirits*, that 'tis no wonder we cannot certainly divine the reason of so strange an action. And yet (2) we may conjecture at some things that may render it less *improbable*. For some have thought that the *Genii* (whom both the *Platonical* and *Christian Antiquity* thought embodied) are recreated by the reeks and vapours of humane bloud and the *spirits* that derive from them. Which supposal (if we grant them bodies) is not unlikely, every thing being *refresh'd* and *nourish'd* by its like. And that they are not perfectly *abstract* from all body and matter, besides the reverence we owe to the wisest antiquity, there are several considerable arguments I could alledge to render it exceeding probable. Which things supposed, the *Devil's sucking* the *Sorcerefs* is no great wonder, nor difficult to be accounted for. Or perhaps (3) this may be onely a *diabolical Sacrament* and Ceremony to confirm the *hellish covenant*. To which I adde, (4) That

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which

which to me seems most probable, viz. That the *Familiar* doth not onely suck the *Witch*, but in the action insueth some *poisonous ferment* into her, which gives her *imagination* and *spirits* a *magical tincture*, whereby they become *mischievously influential*: and the word *venifica* intimates some such matter. Now that the *imagination* hath a mighty power in operation, is seen in the just now mention'd *Signatures* and *Diseases* that it causeth; and that the *fancy* is modified by the *qualities* of the *bloud* and *spirits*, is too evident to need proof: which things supposed, 'tis plain to conceive that the *evil spirit* having *breath'd* some *wile vapour* into the *body* of the *Witch*, it may taint her *bloud* and *spirits* with a *noxious quality*, by which her *infected imagination*, heightned by *melancholy*, and this *worse cause*, may do much hurt upon *bodies* that are *impressible* by such *influences*. And 'tis very likely that this *ferment* disposeth the *imagination* of the *Sorceress* to cause the mentioned *ἀπαρτία*, or *separation* of the *soul* from the *body*, and may perhaps keep the *body* in *fittemper* for its *re-entry*; as also it may facilitate *transformation*, which, it may be, could not be effected by *ordinary* and *unassisted imagination*.

Thus we see 'tis not so desperate to form an
 appre-

apprehension of the manner of these odde performances; and though they are not done the way I have describ'd, yet what I have said may help us to a conceit of the possibility, which sufficeth for my purpose. And though the Hypothesis I have gone upon will seem as unlikely to some, as the things they attempt to explain are to others, yet I must desire their leave to suggest, that most things seem *unlikely* (especially to the conceited and opinionative) at first proposal; and many great truths are *strange and improbable*, till custom and acquaintance have reconciled them to our fancies. And I'll presume to adde on this occasion, (though I love not to be confident in affirming) that there is none of the *Platonical supposals* I have used, but what I could make appear to be *fair and reasonable*, to the capable and unprejudic'd.

But I come (3) to another *prejudice* against the being of *Witches*, which is, That 'tis very improbable that the *Devil*, who is a *wise and mighty spirit*, should be at the beck of a poor *Hag*, and have so little to do as to attend the errands of the *impotent lusts* of a *silly old woman*.

To which I might answer, (1) That 'tis much more *improbable* that all the *world* should be *deceiv'd* in matters of *fact*, and circumstances

of the clearest evidence and conviction, then that the *Devil*, who is *wicked*, should be also *unwise*; and that he that persuades all his subjects and accomplices out of their wits, should himself act like his own temptations and persuasions. In brief, there is nothing more strange in this objection, then that *wickedness* is *baseness* and *servility*, and that the *Devil* is at leisure to serve those he is at leisure to tempt, and industrious to ruin. And again, (2) I see no necessity to believe that the *Devil* is always the *Witch's confederate*; but perhaps it may fitly be consider'd, whether the *Familiar* be not some *departed humane spirit*, forsaken of God and goodness, and swallowed up by the unsatiable desire of mischief and revenge, which possibly by the *laws* and *capacity* of its *state* it cannot execute *immediately*. And why we should presume that the *Devil* should have the liberty of wandring up and down the Earth and Air, when he is said to be held in the *chains* of *darkness*; and yet that the *separated souls* of the *wicked*, of whom no such thing is affirm'd in any *Sacred Record*, should be thought so *imprison'd*, that they cannot possibly wag from the place of their *confinement*, I know no shadow of conjecture. This *conceit* I'm confident hath prejudic'd many against the

the belief of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, they not being able to conceive that the *Devil* should be so ludicrous as appearing *Spirits* are sometimes reported to be in their frolicks; and they presume, that *souls departed* never re-visit the free and open *Regions*; which confidence I know nothing to justify: For since good men in their state of *separation* are said to be *ἰοδύζωνες*, why the wicked may not be supposed to be *ἰοδαιμόνες* in the worst sense of the word, I know nothing to help me to imagine. And if it be supposed that the *Imps* of *Witches* are sometimes wicked *Spirits* of our own kind and nature, and possibly the same that have been *Sorcerers* and *Witches* in this life: This supposal may give a fairer and more probable account of many of the actions of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*, then the other *Hypothesis*, that they are always *Devils*. And to this conjecture I'll adventure to subjoin another, which also hath its probability, viz. (3) That 'tis not impossible but that the *Familiars* of *Witches* are a servile kind of *Spirits*, of a very inferiour constitution and nature, and none of those that were once of the highest *Hierarchy*, now degenerated into the *Spirits* we call *Devils*. And for my part I must confess, that I think the common division of *Spirits* much too general, conceiving it likely there

there may be as great a Variety of Intellectual creatures in the invisible world, as there is of Animals in the visible: and that all the superiour, yea, and inferiour Regions, have their several kinds of spirits, differing in their natural perfections, as well as in the kinds and degrees of their depravities; which being supposed, 'tis very probable that those of the basest and meanest Orders are they who submit to the mention'd servilities. And thus the sagess and grandeur of the Prince of darkness need not be brought into question.

But (4) the opinion of Witches seems to some to accuse Providence, and to suggest that it hath expoed Innocents to the fury and malice of revengeful Fiends; yea, and supposeth those most obnoxious, for whom we might most reasonably expect a more special tutelary care and protection, most of the cruel practices of those presum'd Instruments of Hell being upon Children, who as they least deserve to be deserted by that Providence that superintends all things, so they most need its guardian influence.

To this so specious an Objection I have these things to answer. (1) Providence is a Deep unfathomable; and if we should not believe the
Phænomena

Phænomena of our *senses*, before we can reconcile them to our *notions* of Providence, we must be grosser Scepticks then ever yet was extant. The *miseries* of the *present life*, the *unequal distributions* of good and evil, the *ignorance* and *barbarity* of the greatest part of mankind, the *fatal disadvantages* we all are under, and the *hazard* we run of being eternally miserable and undone; these, I say, are things that can hardly be made *consistent* with that *Wisdom* and *Goodness* that we are sure hath made, and mingled it self with all things. And yet we believe there is a *beauty*, and *harmony*, and *goodness* in that Providence, though we cannot unriddle it in particular instances; nor, by reason of our ignorance and imperfection, clear it from *contradicting appearances*; and consequently, we ought not to deny the being of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, because they will create us some difficulties in our *notions* of Providence. But to come more close, (2) Those that believe that *Infants* are *Heirs* of *Hell* & *Children* of the *Devil* as soon as they are *disclosed* to the world, cannot certainly offer such an objection; for what is a little *trifling* pain of a moment, to those *eternal tortures*, to which, if they die as soon as they are born, according to the tenour of this Doctrin, they are *everlastingly exposed*? But however the case

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case stands as to that, 'tis certain, (3) That Providence hath not secur'd them from other violences they are obnoxious too from cruelty and accident ; and yet we accuse It not when a whole Townful of *Innocents* fall a *Victim* to the rage and ferity of barbarous executioners in wars and Massacres. To which I adde, (4) That 'tis likely the mischief is not so often done by the evil spirit immediately, but by the malignant influence of the *Sorcerers*, whose power of hurting consists in the fore-mention'd ferment, which is infused into her by the *Familiar*. So that I am apt to think there may be a power of real fascination in the *Witch's* eyes and imagination, by which for the most part she acts upon tender bodies. *Nescio quis teneros oculus—*

For the pestilential spirits being darted by a spiteful and vigorous imagination from the eye, and meeting with those that are weak and passive in the bodies which they enter, will not fail to infect them with a noxious quality, that makes dangerous and strange alterations in the person invaded by this poisonous influence : which way of acting by subtil and invisible instruments is ordinary and familiar in all natural efficiencies. And 'tis now past question, that nature for the most part acts by subtil streams and aporhæ's of minute particles, which pass from one body to another.

another. Or however that be, this kind of agency is as conceivable as any of those qualities ignorance hath call'd *sympathy* and *antipathy*, the reality of which we doubt not, though the manner of action be *unknown*. Yea, the thing I speak of is as easie to be apprehended, as how infection should pass in certain *tenuous streams* through the air from one house to another; or, as how the biting of a *mad Dog* should fill all the blood and spirits with a *venomous* and *malign ferment*; the application of the *vertue* doing the same in our case, as that of *contact* doth in this. Yea, some kinds of *fascination* are perform'd in this grosser and more sensible way, as by *striking*, giving *Apples*, and the like, by which the *contagious quality* may be transmitted, as we see *diseases* often are by the *touch*. Now in this way of conjecture, a good account may be given why *Witches* are most powerful upon *Children* & *timorous persons*, viz. because their *spirits* and *imaginations* being *weak* and *passive*, are not able to resist the *fatal invasion*; whereas men of bold minds, who have plenty of *strong* and *vigorous spirits* are secure from the *contagion*, as in *pestilential Airs* clean bodies are not so liable to infection as are other tempers. Thus then we see 'tis likely enough that very often the Sorceress her self doth the mischief; and we know,

de facto, that Providence doth not always secure us from one another's injuries. And yet I must confess, that many times also the evil spirit is the *mischievous Agent*; though this confession draw on me another objection, which I next propose:

(5) Then it may be said, that if *wicked spirits* can hurt us by the *direction*, and at the desire of a *Witch*, one would think they should have the same power to do us injury without *instigation* or *compact*; and if this be granted, 'tis a wonder that we are not always annoi'd and infested by them. To which.

I return, (1) That the *laws, liberties and restraints* of the *inhabitants* of the other world are to us utterly *unknown*, and this way we can only argue our selves into *confessions* of our *ignorance*; which every man must acknowledge that is not as *immodest* as *ignorant*. It must be granted by all that own the *being, power and malice* of *evil spirits*, that the *security* we enjoy is *wonderful*, whether they act by *Witches* or not; and by what *Laws* they are kept from making us a prey, to speak like *Philosophers*, we cannot tell: yea, why they should be permitted to tempt and ruine us in our *Souls*, and restrain'd from touching or hurting us in our *Bodies*, is a *mystery*.

mystery not easily *accountable*. But yet (2) though we acknowledge their power to vex and torment us in our bodies also, yet a reason may be given why they are less frequent in this kind of mischief, *viz.* because their main designs are levell'd against the interest and happiness of our Souls, which they can best promote, when their actions are most *fly* and *secret*; whereas did they ordinarily persecute men in their bodies, their *agency* and *wicked influence* would be discover'd, and make a mighty noise in the world, whereby men would be awaken'd to a more suitable and vigorous opposition, by the use of such means as would engage *Providence* to rescue them from their rage and *cruelties*, & at last defeat them in their great purposes of *undoing* us *eternally*. Thus we may conceive that the *security* we enjoy may well enough *consist* with the *power* and *malice* of those *evil spirits*; and upon this account we may suppose that *Laws* of their own may prohibit their *unlicens'd injuries*, not from any *goodness* there is in their *Constitutions*, but in order to the more *successful* carrying on the *projects* of the *dark Kingdom*; as *Generals* forbid *plunder*, not out of love to their *Enemies*, but in order to their own *success*. And hence (3) we may suppose a *Law* of *permission* to hurt

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us at the instance of the *Sorcerers*, may well stand with the *polity* of *Hell*, since by gratifying the wicked person they encourage her in *malice* and *revenge*, and promote thereby the main ends of their *black confederacy*, which are to propagate *wickedness*, and to ruine us in our *eternal interests*. And yet (4) 'tis clear to those that believe the *History* of the *Gospel*, that *wicked spirits* have vex'd the bodies of men, without any *instigation* that we read of; and at this day 'tis very likely that many of the *strange accidents* and *diseases* that befall us, may be the *infliction* of *evil spirits*, prompted to hurt us onely by the delight they take in *mischiefe*. So that we cannot argue the improbability of their hurting *Children* and others by *Witches*, from our own *security* and *freedom* from the *effects* of their *malice*, which perhaps we feel in more instances then we are aware of.

But (6) another *prejudice* against the belief of *Witches*, is, a presumption upon the *enormous force* of *melancholy* and *imagination*, which without doubt can do *wonderful things*, and beget *strange persuasions*; and to these causes some ascribe the presum'd effects of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*. To which I reply briefly, and yet I hope sufficiently;

(1) That

(1) That to resolve all the *clear* circumstances of *fact*, which we find in well attested and confirm'd Relations of this kind, into the power of *deceivable imagination*, is to make *fancy* the greater *prodigy*, and to suppose, that it can do *stranger feats* then are believed of any other kind of *fascination*. And to think that *pins* and *Nails*, for instance, can, by the *power of imagination* be convey'd within the skin, or that *imagination* should deceive so many as have been witnesses in *objects of sense*, in all the circumstances of *discovery*; this, I say, is to be infinitely more *credulous* then the assertors of *Sorcery* and *Demoniaick contracts*. And by the same reason it may be believ'd, that all the *Battels* and *strange events* of the world, which our selves have not seen, are but *dreams* and *fond imaginations*, and like those that are fought in the *clouds*, when the *brains* of the *deluded spectators* are the onely *Theatre* of those *fancied transactions*. And (2) to deny evidence of *fact*, because *their imagination* may deceive the *Relators*, when we have no reason to think *so* but a bare presumption, that there is no such thing as is related, is quite to destroy the credit of all *humane testimony*, and to make *all men liars* in a larger sense then the *Prophet* concluded in his haste. For not onely the *melancholick*

cholick and the fanciful, but the grave and the sober, whose judgments we have no reason to suspect to be tainted by their *imaginations*, have from their own knowledg & experience made reports of this nature. But to this it will possibly be rejoin'd, the *Reply* will be another *prejudice* against the belief I contend for, *viz.*

(7) That 'tis a suspicious circumstance that *Witchcraft* is but a *fancy*, since the persons that are accus'd are commonly *poor* and *miserable old women*, who are overgrown with *discontent* and *melancholy*, which are very *imaginative*; and the persons said to be bewitch'd are for the most part *Children*, or people very weak, who are easily imposed upon, and are apt to receive *strong impressions* from nothing: whereas were there any such thing really, 'tis not likely, but that the more *cunning* and *subtil desperado's*, who might the more successfully carry on the *mischievous designs* of the *dark Kingdom*, should be oftner engaged in those *black confederacies*, and also one would expect effects of the *hellish combination* upon others then the *innocent* and the *ignorant*.

To which *Objection* it might perhaps be enough to return (as hath been above suggested) that nothing can be concluded by this
and

and such like arguings, but that the *policy* and *menages* of the *instruments* of *darkness* are to us altogether *unknown*, and as much in the dark as their *natures*, mankind being no more acquainted with the *reasons* and *methods* of action in the other world, then poor *Cottagers* and *Mechanicks* are with the *intriques* of *Government* and *reasons* of *State*. Yea peradventure (2) 'tis one of the great *designs*, as 'tis certainly the *interest*, of those wicked *Agents* and *Machinators*, industriously to hide from us their *influences* and *ways* of acting, and to work, as near as is possible, *incognito*; upon which supposal 'tis easie to conceive a reason, why they most commonly work by, and upon the weak and the ignorant, who can make no *cunning observations*, or tell *credible tales* to detect their artifice. Besides (3) 'tis likely a *strong imagination*; that cannot be *weaken'd* or *disturb'd* by a *busie* and *subtil ratiotination*, is a necessary requisite to those wicked performances; and without doubt an *heightned* and *obstinate fancy* hath a great influence upon *impresive spirits*; yea, and as I have conjectur'd before, on the more *passive* and *susceptible bodies*. And I am very apt to believe, that there are as *real communications* and *intercourses* between our *spirits*, as there are between *material agents*; which *secret influences*, though

though they are unknown in their nature, and ways of acting, yet they are sufficiently felt in their effects: for experience attests, that some by the very majesty and greatness of their spirits, discover'd by nothing but a certain noble air that accompanies them, will bear down others less great and generous, and make them sneak before them; and some by I know not what stupifying vertue, wil tie up the tongue, and confine the spirits of those who are otherwise brisk and voluble. Which thing supposed, the influences of a spirit possess'd of an active and enormous imagination, may be malign and fatal where they cannot be resisted, especially when they are accompanied by those poisonous reaks that the evil spirit breaths into the Sorceress, which likely are shot out, and applied by a fancy heightened and prepared by melancholy and discontent. And thus we may conceive why the melancholick and envious are used upon such occasions, and for the same reason the ignorant, since knowledge checks and controls imagination; and those that abound much in the imaginative faculties do not usually exceed in the rational. And perhaps (4) the Demon himself useth the imagination of the Witch so qualified for his purpose, even in those actions of mischief which are more properly his; for it is most probable,
that

that *Spirits* act not upon *bodies* immediately, and by their *naked essence*, but by means *proportionate* and *sutable* in *instruments* that they use; upon which account likely 'tis so strictly required, that the *Sorcerers* should believe, that so her *imagination* might be more at the devotion of the *mischievous Agent*. And for the same reason also *Ceremonies* are used in *Incantments*, viz. for the begetting this *diabolical faith*, and heightning the *fancy* to a degree of *strength* and *vigour* sufficient to make it a fit *instrument* for the design'd performance. And these I think are reasons of *likelihood* and *probability*, why the *bellish confederates* are mostly the *ignorant* and the *melancholick*. To pass then to another prejudice.

(8) The frequent *impostures* that are met with in this kind, beget in some a belief, that all such *relations* are *forgeries* and *tales*; and if we urge the evidence of a *story* for the belief of *Witches* or *Apparitions*, they will produce two as *seemingly strong* and *plausible*, which shall conclude in *mistake* or *design*; inferring thence, that all others are of the same quality and credit. But such arguers may please to consider,

(1) That a *single relation* for an *Affirmative*, sufficiently confirmed and attested, is worth a

thousand *tales* of *forgery* and *imposture*, from whence cannot be concluded an *universal negative*. So that, though all the *Objectors* stories be *true*, and an hundred times as many more such *deceptions*; yet one *relation*, wherein no *fallacy* or *fraud* could be suspected for our *Affirmative*, would spoil any *Conclusion* could be erected on them. And

(2) It seems to me a belief sufficiently *bold* and *precarious*, that *all* these *relations* of *forgery* and *mistake* should be certain, and not *one* in *millions* of those which attest the *affirmative reality*, with circumstances as good as could be expected, or wish'd, should be *true*, but all *fabulous* and *vain*. And they have no reason to object *credulity* to the assertors of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*, that can swallow so large a morsel. And I desire such *Objectors* to consider,

(3) Whether it be fair to infer, that because there are some *Cheats* and *Impostures*, that therefore there are no *Realities*. Indeed frequency of *deceit* and *fallacy* will warrant a greater care and caution in *examining*, and *scrupulosity* and *shininess* of *assent* to things wherein *fraud* hath been *practised*, or may in the least degree be suspected. But, to conclude, because that an old woman's *fancy* abused her, or some *knavish fellows*

fellows put tricks upon the ignorant and the timorous, that therefore whole *Asises* have been a thousand times deceived in judgments upon matters of fact, and numbers of sober persons have been forsworn in things wherein perjury could not advantage them; I say, such inferences are as void of reason, as they are of charity and good manners.

But it may be suggested further, (9) That it cannot be imagin'd what design the Devil should have in making those solemn compacts, since persons of such debauch'd and irreclaimable dispositions as those with whom he is supposed to confederate, are pretty securely his, antecedently to the bargain, and cannot be more so by it, since they cannot put their souls out of possibility of the Divine Grace but by the Sin that is unpardonable; or, if they could so dispose and give away themselves, it will to some seem very unlikely, that a great and mighty Spirit should oblige himself to such observances, and keep such a-do to secure the soul of a silly body, which 'twere odds but it would be His though He put himself to no further trouble then that of his ordinary temptations.

To which suggestions 'twere enough to say, that 'tis sufficient if the thing be well prov'd,

though the *design* be not known. And to argue negatively à fine, is very unconvulsive in such matters. The Laws and affairs of the other world (as hath been intimated) are vastly differing from those of our Regions, and therefore 'tis no wonder we cannot judge of their *designs*, when we know *nothing* of their *menages*, & so little of their *natures*. The ignorant looker-on can't imagine what the *Limner* means by those seemingly rude lines and scrawls which he intends for the rudiments of a *Picture*; and the *Figures* of *Mathematick Operation* are non-sense, and dashes at a venture to one uninstructed in *Mechanicks*. We are in the dark to one another's purposes and intendments; & there are a thousand intrigues in our little matters, which will not presently confess their design even to *sagacious inquisitors*. And therefore 'tis folly and incogitancy to argue any thing one way or other from the *designs* of a sort of Beings, with whom we so little communicate; and possibly we can take no more aim or guess at their *projects* and *designments*, then the *gazing Beasts* can do at ours, when they see the *Traps* and *Gins* that are laid for them, but understand nothing what they mean. Thus in general.

But I attempt something more particularly, in order to which I must premise that the

Devil

Devil is a name for a *Body Politick*, in which there are very different *Orders* and *Degrees* of *Spirits*, and perhaps in as much *variety* of *place* and *state*, as among our selves; so that 'tis not one and the same person that makes all the compacts with those abused and seduced Souls, but they are divers, and *those* 'tis like of the meanest and basest quality in the *Kingdom of darkness*; which being supposed, I offer this account of the *probable design* of those *wicked Agents*, viz. That having none to rule or tyrannize over within the *Circle* of their own nature and government, they affect a *proud Empire* over us (the desire of *Dominion* and *Authority* being largely spread through the whole *circumference* of *degenerated nature*, especially among those, whose *pride* was their *original transgression*) every one of these then desires to get him *Vassals* to pay him homage, and to be employed like *Slaves* in the services of his lusts and appetites; to gratifie which desire, 'tis like enough to be provided & allowed by the *constitution* of their *State* and *Government*, that every *wicked spirit* shall have those Souls as his *property*, and *particular servants* and *attendants*, whom he can catch in such compacts, as those *wild Beasts* that we can take in hunting, are by the allowance of the Law

our

our own; and those Slaves that a man hath purchas'd, are his peculiar goods, and the vassals of his will. Or rather those deluding Fiends are like the seducing fellows we call *Spirits*, who inveigle Children by their false and flattering promises, and carry them away to the *Plantations of America*, to be servilly employed there in the works of *their own* profit and advantage. And as those base Agents will humour and flatter the simple unwary Youth, till they are on Ship-board, and without the reach of those that might rescue them from their hands: In like manner the more *mischievous Tempter* studies to gratifie, please, and accommodate to those he deals with in this kind, till death hath lanch'd them into the *Deep*, and they are past the danger of *Prayers, Repentance, and Endeavours*; and then *He* useth them as pleaseth *Him*. This account I think is not unreasonable, and 'twill fully answer the Objection. For though the matter be not as I have conjectur'd, yet 'twill suggest a way how it may be *conceiv'd*, which nulls the pretence, That the *Design* is *inconceivable*.

But then we are still liable to be question'd, (10) how it comes about, that those *proud and insolent Designers* practise in this kind

kind upon so few, when one would expect, that they should be still trading this way, and everywhere be driving on the project, which the vileness of men makes so feasible, and would so much serve the interest of their lusts.

To which, among other things that might be suggested, I return, (1) That we are never liable to be so betrayed and abused, till by our *vile dispositions* and *tendencies* we have forfeited the *tutelary* care and *oversight* of the better Spirits; which, though generally they are our *guard* and *defence* against the malice and violence of *evil Angels*, yet it may well enough be thought that sometimes they may take their leave of such as are swallowed up by *malice*, *envy*, and *desire of revenge*, qualities most contrary to their *Life* and *Nature*, and leave them exposed to the *invasion* and *solicitations* of those *wicked Spirits*, to whom such *hateful Attributes* make them very *suitable*. And if there be particular *guardian Angels*, as 'tis not absurd to fancy, it may then well be supposed, that no man is obnoxious to those projects and attempts, but onely such whose *vile* and *mischievous natures* have driven from them their *protecting Genius*. And against this
deregulation.

dereliction to the power of evil spirits, 'tis likely enough what some affirm, that the Royal Psalmist directs that Prayer, Psalm. 71, 9, 10. *Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.* For— They that keep my soul [βοηθῶντες τὴν ψυχὴν μου, as the LXX and the Vulgar Latin, *Qui custodiunt animam meam*] they take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him, persecute him and take him, for there is none to deliver him. But I adde, (2) That 'tis very probable, that the state wherein they are, will not easily permit palpable intercourses between the bad Genii and our nature, since 'tis like enough that their own Laws and Government do not allow their frequent excursions into this world. Or, it may with as great probability be supposed, that 'tis a very hard and painful thing for them, to force their thin and tenuous bodies into a visible consistence, and such shapes as are necessary for their designs in their correspondencies with Witches. For in this action their bodies must needs be exceedingly compress'd, which cannot be well supposed without a painful sense. And this is perhaps a reason why there are so few Apparitions, and why appearing Spirits are commonly in such haste to be gone, viz. that they

they may be deliver'd from the *unnatural pressure* of their *tender Vehicles*, which I confess holds more in the *apparitions* of good than of *evil Spirits*, most Relations of this kind, describing their discoveries of themselves, as very *transient*, (though for those the Holy Scripture records, there may be peculiar Reasons why they are not *so*) whereas the *wicked ones* are not altogether so *quick* and *hasty* in their *Visits*: The reason of which probably is, the great *subtilty* and *tenuity* of the bodies of the former, which will require far greater degrees of *compression*, and consequently of *pain*, to make them *visible*; whereas the latter, are more *sæculent* and *gross*, and so nearer allyed to *palpable consistencies*, and more easily reduceable to *appearance* and *visibility*.

At this turn, Sir, you may perceive that I have again made use of the *Platonick Hypothesis*, That *Spirits are Embodied*, upon which indeed a great part of my Discourse is grounded: And therefore I hold my self obliged to a short account of that supposal. It seems then to me very *probable* from the Nature of *Sense*, and *Analogie* of *Nature* For (1.) We perceive in our selves, that all *Sense* is caus'd and excited by *motion* made in *matter*; And when those *motions* which convey *sensible impressions* to the

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Brain, the *Seat of Sense*, are intercepted, *Sense* is lost: So that, if we suppose *Spirits* perfectly to be *disjoyn'd* from all *matter*, 'tis not conceivable how they can have the sense of any thing: For how *material Objects* should any way be perceiv'd, or felt without *vital union* with *matter*, 'tis not possible to imagine. Nor doth it (2.) seem suitable to the *Analogie* of *Nature*, which useth not to make *precipitious leaps* from one thing to another, but usually proceeds by *orderly steps* and *gradations*: whereas were there no order of *Beings* between *us*, who are so deeply plunged into the grossest matter, and pure un bodied *Spirits*, 'twere a mighty *jump* in *Nature*. Since then the greatest part of the *World* consists of the *finer* portions of matter, and our own *Souls* are *immediately united* unto these, 'tis infinitely probable to conjecture, that the nearer orders of *Spirits* are *vitally joyn'd* to such *Bodies*. And so *Nature* by *Degrees* ascending still by the more *refin'd* and *subtile* matter, gets at last to the pure *Nbes* or *immaterial minds*, which the *Platonists* made the *highest Order* of *created Beings*. But of this I have discoursed else-where, and have said thus much of it at present, because it will enable me to add another Reason of the *unfrequency* of *Apparitions* and *Compacts*, viz.

(3.) Because 'tis very likely, that these Regions are very unsuitable, and disproportion'd to the frame and temper of their Senses and Bodies; so that perhaps, the Courser Spirits can no more bear the Air of our World, then Batts and Owls can the brightest beams of Day. Nor can the Purer and Better any more endure the noysom steams, and poysonous reeks of this Dunghil Earth, then the Delicate can bear a confinement in nasty Dungeons, and the foul squallid Caverns of uncomfortable Darknes. So that 'tis no more wonder, that the better Spirits no oftner appear, than that men are not more frequently in the Dark Hollows under ground. Nor is't any more strange that evil Spirits so rarely visit us, then that Fishes do not ordinarily fly in the Air, as 'tis said one sort of them doth; or that we see not the Batt daily fluttering in the beams of the Sun. And now by the help of what I have spoken under this Head, I am provided with some things wherewith to disable another Objection, which I thus propose:

(XI.) If there be such an intercourse between Evil Spirits and the Wicked, how comes it about that there is no correspondence between Good Spirits and the Vertuous? since without doubt, these are as desirous to propagate the Spirit and Designs of the upper and better World, as those are

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to promote the Interest of the Kingdom of Darkness.

Which way of arguing is still from our Ignorance of the State and Government of the other World, which must be confessed, and may, without prejudice to the Proposition I defend. But particularly, I say, (1.) That we have ground enough to believe, that Good Spirits do interpose in, yea, and govern our Affairs. For that there is a Providence reaching from Heaven to Earth, is generally acknowledg'd; but that this supposeth all things to be order'd by the immediate influence, and interposal of the Supreme Deity, is not very Philosophical to suppose; since if we judge by the Analogie of the Natural World, all things we see are carried on by the Ministry of Second Causes, and intermediate Agents. And it doth not seem so Magnificent and Becoming an apprehension of the Supreme Numen, to phancy His immediate Hand in every trivial Management. But 'tis exceeding likely to conjecture, that much of the Government of us, and our Affairs, is committed to the better Spirits, with a due subordination and subserviency to the Will of the chief Rector of the Universe. And 'tis not absurd to believe, that there is a Government runs from Highest to Lowest, the better and more perfect orders of Being, still ruling

ling the inferiour and less perfect. So that some one would phancy that perhaps the *Angels* may manage us, as we do the *Creatures* that God and Nature have placed under our *Empire* and *Dominion*. But however that is, That God rules the lower World by the *Ministry* of *Angels*, is very consonant to the *sacred Oracles*. Thus, Deut. XXXII. viii, ix. When the Most High divided the Nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, καὶ ἀεὶ μὲν ἐξ ἑλίκων θύ, according to the number of the *Angels* of God, as the *Septuagint* renders it; the Authority of which Translation, is abundantly credited and asserted, by its being quoted in the New Testament, without notice of the *Hebrew* Text, even there where it differs from it, as learned men have observ'd. We know also, that *Angels* were very familiar with the *Patriarchs* of old; and *Jacob's Ladder* is a *Mystery*, which imports their *ministring* in the affairs of the Lower World. Thus *Origen* and others understand, that to be spoken by the *Presidential Angels*, Jer. LI. ix. We would have healed *BABYLON*, but she is not healed, forsake her, and let us go. Like the *Voyce* heard in the *Temple* before the taking of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*, *Μη τὰ βασιλεῖα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*. And before *Nebuchadnezzar* was sent to learn *Wisdom* and *Religion* among the *Beasts*, He sees

sees a *Watcher*, according to the 70. an *Angel*, and an *only One* come down from heaven, Dan. IV. xiii. who pronounceth the *sad Decree* against *Him*, and calls it the *Decree of the Watchers*, who very probably were the *Guardian Genii* of *Himself* and his *Kingdome*. And that there are particular *Angels* that have the *special Rule* and *Government* of particular *Kingdomes*, *Provinces*, *Cities*, yea and of *Persons*, I know nothing that can make improbable: The instance is notorious in *Daniel*, of the *Angels* of *Persia* and *Græcia*, that hindred the other that was engaged for the concerns of *Judea*; yea, our *Saviour Himself* tells us, that *Children have their Angels*, and the *Congregation of Disciples* supposed that *St. Peter* had *his*. Which things, if they be granted, the good *Spirits* have not so little to do with us, and our matters, as is generally believed. And perhaps it would not be absurd, if we referr'd many of the *strange thwarts*, and *unexpected events*, the *disappointments* and *lucky coincidences* that befall us, the *unaccountable fortunes* and *successes* that attend some *lucky men*, and the *unhappy fates* that dog others that seem born to be *miserable*; the *Fame* and *Favour* that still waits on some without any conceivable *motive* to allure it, and the *general neglect* of others more *deserving*, whose *worth* is not *acknowledg'd*;

I say, these, and such like odde things, may with the greatest probability be resolv'd into the *Conduct* and *Menages* of those invisible Supervisors, that preside over, and govern our affairs.

But if they so far concern themselves in our matters, how is it that they appear not to maintain a visible and constant correspondence with some of the better Mortals, who are most fitted for their Communications and their influence? To which I have said some things already, when I accounted for the unfrequency of Apparitions; and I now add what I intend for another return to the main Objection, viz.

(2.) That the apparition of good Spirits is not needful for the Designs of the better World, whatever such may be for the interest of the other. For we have had the Appearance and Co-habitation of the Son of God, we have Moses and the Prophets, and the continued influence of the Spirit, the greatest Arguments to strengthen Faith, the most powerful Motives to excite our Love, and the Noblest Encouragements to quicken and raise our desires and hopes, any of which are more than the apparition of an Angel; which would indeed be a great gratification of the Animal Life, but 'twould render our Faith less noble and less generous, were it frequently so assisted: Blessed are they that believe, and yet have
not

not seen. Besides which, the good *Angels* have no such ends to prosecute, as the gaining any *Vassals* to serve them, they being *ministring Spirits* for our good, and no *self-designers* for a proud and insolent *Dominion* over us. And it may be perhaps not impertinently added, That they are not always evil *Spirits* that appear, as is, I know not well upon what grounds, generally imagined; but that the extraordinary *detections* of *Murders*, latent *Treasures*, falsified and unfulfill'd *Bequests*, which are sometimes made by *Apparitions*, may be the courteous Discoveries of the better, and more benign *Genii*. Yea, 'tis not unlikely, that those *Warnings* that the World sometimes hath of approaching *Judgments* and *Calamities* by *Prodigies*, and sundry odd *Phenomena*, are the kind *Informations* of some of the *Inhabitants* of the upper World. Thus, was *Jerusalem* forewarned before its sacking by *Antiochus*, by those *Aiery Horsemen* that were seen through all the City, for almost forty days together, 2 Mac V.ii,iii. And the other *Prodigious Portents* that fore-ran its Destruction by *Titus*: which I mention, because they are *notorious instances*. And though, for mine own part, I scorn the ordinary *Tales* of *Prodigies*, which proceed from *superstitious fears*, and *unacquaintance* with *Nature*, and have been used to bad purposes

poses by the *Jealous* and the *Ignorant*; Yet I think that the Arguments that are brought by a late very ingenious Author, to conclude against such Warnings and Predictions in the whole kind, are *short* and *inconsequent*, and built upon too narrow *Hypothesis*. For if it be supposed, that there is a sort of Spirits over us, and about us, who can give a probable guess at the more remarkable *futurities*, I know not why it may not be conjectured, that the kindness they have for us, and the appetite of fore-telling strange things, and the putting the World upon expectation, which we find is very grateful to our own Natures, may not incline them also to give us some general notice of those uncommon Events which they foresee. And I yet perceive no reason we have to phancy, that whatever is done in this kind, must needs be either immediately from *Heaven*, or from the *Angels* by extraordinary commission and appointment. But it seems to me not unreasonable to believe, that those officious Spirits, that oversee our affairs, perceiving some mighty and sad alterations at hand, in which their Charge is much concerned, cannot chuse, by reason of their affection to us, but give us some seasonable hints of those approaching Calamities; to which also their natural desire to fore-tell strange things to come, may

contribute to incline them. And by this Hypothesis, the fairest probabilities, and strongest ratiotinations against Prodigies, may be made unserviceable. But this onely by the way. I proceed to the next Objection, which may be made to speak thus :

(XII.) *The belief of Witches, and the wonderful things they are said to perform by the help of the Confederate Dæmon, weakens our Faith, and exposeth the World to Infidelity in the great matters of our Religion. For if They by Diabolical assistance, can inflict and cure Diseases, and do things so much beyond the comprehension of our Philosophy, and activity of common Nature ; What assurance can we have , that the Miracles that confirm our Gospel were not the effects of a Compact of like nature , and that Devils were not cast out by Beelzebub? If evil Spirits can assume Bodies, and render themselves visible in humane likenels ; What security can we have of the reality of the Resurrection of Christ ? And if, by their help, Witches can enter Chambers invisibly through Key-holes, and little unperceived Cranneys, and transform themselves at pleasure ; What Arguments of Divinity are there in our Saviour's shewing himself in the midst of his Disciples , when the Doors were shut, and his Transfiguration in the Mount ? Miracles are the great inducements of*
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Belief, and How shall we distinguish a Miracle from a Lying Wonder; a Testimony from Heaven, from a Trick of the Angels of Hell; if they can perform things that astonish and confound our Reasons, and are beyond all the Possibilities of Humane Nature? This Objection is spiteful and mischievous, but I thus endeavour to dispatch it.

(1.) The Wonders done by Confederacy with wicked Spirits, cannot derive a suspicion upon the undoubted Miracles that were wrought by the Author & Promulgers of our Religion, as if they were performed by Diabolical Compact, since their Spirit, Endeavours and Designs were notoriously contrary to all the Tendencies, Aims and Interests of the Kingdome of Darknes. For, as to the Life and Temper of the Blessed and Adorable JESUS, we know there was an incomparable sweetness in his Nature, Humility in his Manners, Calmness in his Temper, Compassion in his Miracles, Modesty in his Expressions, Holiness in all his Actions, Hatred of Vice and Baseness, and Love to all the World; all which are essentially contrary to the Nature and Constitution of Apostate Spirits, who abound in Pride and Rancour, Insolence and Rudeness, Tyranny and Baseness, universal Malice, and Hatred of Men. And their Designs are as opposite, as

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their *Spirit* and their *Genius*. And now, Can the *Sun* borrow its *Light* from the *bottomless Abyss*? Can *Heat* and *Warmth* flow in upon the *World* from the *Regions of Snow and Ice*? Can *Fire* freeze, and *Water* burn? Can *Natures*, so infinitely contrary, *communicate*, and jump in *projects*, that are *destructive* to each others *known Interests*? Is there any *Balsome* in the *Cockatrice's Egge*? or, Can the *Spirit of Life* flow from the *Venome* of the *Asp*? Will the *Prince of Darkness* strengthen the *Arm* that is *stretcht out* to pluck his *Usurp't Scepter*, and his *Spoys* from him? And will he lend his *Legions*, to assist the *Armies* of his *Enemy* against him? No, these are impossible *Supposals*; No intelligent *Being* will industriously and knowingly contribute to the *Contradiction* of its own *Principles*, the *Defeat* of its *Purposes*, and the *Ruine* of its own dearest *Interests*. There is no fear then, that our *Faith* should receive prejudice from the *acknowledgment* of the *Being* of *Witches*, and *power* of *evil Spirits*, since 'tis not the *doing wonderful things* that is the onely *Evidence* that the *Holy JESUS* was from *God*, and his *Doctrine* true; but the *conjunction* of other *circumstances*, the *holiness* of his *Life*, the *reasonableness* of his *Religion*, and the *excellency* of his *Designes*, added credit to his *Works*, and strengthened the

great Conclusion, That he could be no other than the Son of God, and Saviour of the World. But besides, I say,

(2.) That since infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* rules the World, it cannot be conceiv'd, that they should give up the greatest part of men to unavoidable deception. And if evil *Angels*, by their *Confederates*, are permitted to perform such astonishing things, as seem so evidently to carry *God's Seal* and *Power* with them, for the confirmation of *Falshoods*, and gaining credit to *Impostors*, without any counter-evidence to disabuse the World; Mankind is expos'd to sad and fatal delusion. And to say that *Providence* will suffer us to be deceived in things of the greatest concernment, when we use the best of our care and endeavours to prevent it, is to speak hard things of *God*; and in effect to affirm, That He hath nothing to do in the Government of the World, or doth not concern Himself in the affairs of poor forlorn Men. And if the *Providence* and *Goodness* of *God* be not a security unto us against such *Deceptions*, we cannot be assured; but that we are always abused by those mischievous *Agents*, in the *Objects* of plain sense, and in all the matters of our daily *Converses*. If ONE that pretends he is immediately sent from *God*, to overthrow the ancient *Fabrick* of *Established* *Worship*.

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Worship, and to erect a *New Religion* in *His* Name; shall be born of a *Virgin*, and honour'd by a *miraculous Star*; proclaimed by a *Song* of seeming *Angels* of *Light*, and *Worshipped* by the *wise Sages* of the *World*; *Revered* by those of the greatest *austerity*, and *admired* by all for a *miraculous Wisdom*, beyond his *Education* and his *Years*: If He shall feed *Multitudes* with almost nothing, and fast himself beyond all the possibilities of *Nature*: If He shall be transformed into the appearance of extraordinary *Glory*, and converse with departed *Prophets* in their *visible Forms*: If He shall *Cure* all *Diseases* without *Physick* or *Endeavour*, and raise the *Dead* to *Life* after they have stunk in their *Graves*: If He shall be honoured by *Voyces* from *Heaven*, and attract the universal *Wonder* of *Princes* and *People*: If he shall allay *Tempests* with a *Beck*, and cast out *Devils* with a *Word*: If He shall fore-tell his own *Death* particularly, with its *Tragical Circumstances*, and his *Resurrection* after it: If the *Veil* of the most *Famous Temple* in the *World* shall be rent, and the *Sun* darkened at his *Funeral*: If He shall, within the time fore-told, break the bonds of *Death*, and lift up his *Head* out of the *Grave*: If *Multitudes* of other departed *Souls* shall arise with *Him*, to attend at the *Solemnity* of *His Resurrection*: If He shall
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after Death, *visibly converse* with, eat and drink with, divers persons, who could not be deceived in a matter of *clear sense*, and *ascend* in Glory in the presence of an astonished and admiring Multitude: I say, if such a One as this should prove a *Diabolical Impostor*, and Providence should permit him to be so credited and acknowledged; What possibility were there then for us to be assured, that we are not always deceived? yea, that our very Faculties were not given us onely to delude and abuse us? And if so, the next Conclusion is, *That there is no God that judgeth in the Earth*; and the best, and most likely Hypothesis will be, *That the World is given up to the Government of the Devils*. But if there be a Providence that superviseth us, (as nothing is more certain) doubtless, it will never suffer poor helpless Creatures to be inevitably deceived, by the craft and subtilty of their mischievous Enemy, to their undoing; but will without question take such care, that the works wrought by Divine Power for the Confirmation of Divine Truth, shall have such visible Marks and Signatures, if not in their Nature, yet in their Circumstances, Ends and Designes, as shall discover whence they are, and sufficiently distinguish them from all Impostures and Delusions. And though wicked Spirits may perform some strange things

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things that may excite wonder for a while, yet *He hath*, and *will* so provide, that they shall be *baffled and discredited*; as we know it was in the case of *Moses* and the *Ægyptian Magicians*.

Now, besides what I have directly said to the *Objection*, I have this to adde to the *Objectors*, That I could wish they would take care of such *Suggestions*; which, if they overthrow not the Opinion they oppose, will dangerously affront the Religion they would seem to acknowledge. For he that saith, *That if there are WITCHES, there is no way to prove that Christ Jesus was not a Magician, and Diabolical Impostor*; puts a deadly Weapon into the hands of the *Infidel*, and is himself next door to the *SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST*: of which, in order to the perswading greater *tendernefs* and *caution* in such matters, I give this short account.

The Sin against the *Holy Ghost* is said to be *Unpardonable*; by which *sad* Attribute, and the Discourse of our Saviour, *Mat. XII.* from the *xxii.* to the *xxxiii ver.* we may understand its Nature: In order to which we consider, That since the *Mercies* of God, and the *Merits* of his Son, are *infinite*, there is nothing can make a Sin *unpardonable*, but what makes it *incurable*; and there is no Sin but what is curable by a *strong Faith*,

Faith, and a *vigorous Endeavour*: For all things are possible to him that believeth. So that, that which makes a Sin incurable, must be somewhat that makes *Faith impossible*, and obstructs all means of Conviction. In order to the finding which, we must consider the ways and methods the Divine Goodness hath taken for the begetting *Faith*, and cure of *Infidelity*: which it attempted, first, by the Prophets, and holy men of ancient times; who, by the excellency of their *Doctrine*, the greatness of their *Miracles*, and the holiness of their *Lives*, endeavoured the conviction and reformation of a stubborn and unbelieving World. But though Few believed their report, and men would not be prevail'd on by what they did, or what they said, yet their *Infidelity* was not hitherto incurable, because further means were provided in the Ministry of John the Baptist, whose Life was more severe, whose Doctrines were more plain, pressing and particular; and therefore 'twas possible that He might have succeeded. Yea, and where He failed, and could not open mens hearts and their eyes, the Effect was still in possibility, and it might be expected from Him that came after, to whom the Prophets and John were but the *Twilight* and the *Dawn*. And though His miraculous Birth, the Song of Angels, the Journey of

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the *Wise Men of the East*, and the *correspondence of Prophecies*, with the *Circumstances of the first appearance of the Wonderful Infant* : I say, though these had not been taken notice of, yet was there a further provision made for the cure of *Infidelity*, in his *astonishing Wisdom*, and most excellent *Doctrines* ; For, *He spake as never Man did*. And when *These* were despised and neglected, yet there were other means towards *Conviction*, and *Cure of Unbelief*, in those mighty *Works* that bore *Testimony of Him*, and were the evident marks of *Divine Power* in their foreheads. But when after all, these clear and unquestionable *Miracles* which were wrought by the *Spirit of God*, and had eminently his *Superscription* on them, shall be ascribed to the *Agency of evil Spirits*, and *Diabolical Compact*, as they were by the malicious and spiteful *Pharisees* in the periods above-mentioned; when those great and last *Testimonies* against *Infidelity*, shall be said to be but the *Tricks of Sorcery*, and *Conplotment with Hellish Confederates*, This is *Blasphemy* in the highest, against the *Power and Spirit of God*, and such as cuts off all means of *Conviction*, and puts the *Unbeliever* beyond all possibilities of *Cure*. For *Miracles* are *God's Seal*, and the great and last evidence of the truth of any *Doctrine*. And though, while these are onely dis-

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believed as to the *Fact*, there remains a possibility of *perswasion*; yet, when the *Fact* shall be acknowledged, but the Power *blasphemed*, and the effects of the adorable Spirit *maliciously* imputed to the Devils; such a *Blasphemy*, such an *Infidelity* is incurable, and consequently unpardonable. I say, in sum, the Sin against the Holy Ghost seems to be a *malicious imputation* of the *Miracles* wrought by the Spirit of God in our Saviour to *Satanical Confederacy*, and the power of *Apostate Spirits*; Than which, nothing is more *blasphemous*, and nothing is more like to provoke the Holy Spirit that is so abused, to an *Eternal Dereliction* of so *Vile* and so *Incurable* an Unbeliever.

This account, as 'tis clear and reasonable in itself, so it is plainly lodg'd in the mention'd Discourse of our Saviour. And those that speak other things about it, seem to me to talk at randome, and perfectly without book. But to leave them to the fondness of their own conceits, I think it now time to draw up to a Conclusion of the whole.

Therefore briefly, Sir, I have endeavoured in these Papers, which my respect and your concernment in the subject have made *yours*, to remove the main prejudices I could think of, against the existence of *Witches* and *Apparitions*:

and I'm sure I have suggested much more against what I defend, than ever I heard or saw in any that opposed it ; whose Discourses, for the most part, have seem'd to me inspired by a lofty scorn of common belief, and some trivial Notions of *Vulgar Philosophy*. And in despising the Common Faith about matters of *Fact*, and fondly adhering to it in things of *Speculation*, they very grossly and absurdly mistake. For in things of *Fact*, the People are as much to be believ'd as the most *subtile Philosophers* and *Speculators*; since here, *Sense* is the Judge. But in matters of *Notions* and *Theory*, They are not at all to be heeded, because *Reason* is to be Judge of these, and this they know not how to use. And yet thus it is with those *wise Philosophers*, that will deny the plain evidence of the *Senses* of Mankind, because they cannot reconcile appearances with the fond Crotchets of a *Philosophy* which they lighted on in the *High-way* by chance, and will adhere to at adventure. So that I profess, for mine own part, I never yet heard any of the confident Declaimers against *Witchcraft* and *Apparitions*, speak any thing that might move a mind, in any degree instructed in the generous kinds of *Philosophy*, and *Notions* of things. And for the *Objections* I have recited, they are such as rise out of mine own thoughts, which

which I obliged to consider what was possible to be said upon this occasion. For though I have examined *Scot's Discovery*, phancying that there I should find the strong reasons of mens dis-belief in this matter; yet I profess I met not with the least suggestion in all that *Farrago*, but what it had been ridiculous for me to have gone about to answer: For the Author doth little but tell *old Tales*, and *silly Legends*, which he confutes and laughs at, and pretends this to be a Confutation of the Being of Witches and Apparitions: In all which, His Reasonings are trifling and *Childish*; and when He ventures at *Philosophy*, He is little better than *absurd*: So that 'twill be a Wonder to me, if any but Boys and Buffoons imbibe any Prejudices against a Belief so infinitely Confirmed, from the Loose and Impotent Suggestions of so weak a Discourser.

And now, Sir, 'tis fit that I relieve your patience; and I shall do so, when I have said, that *Tou* can abundantly prove, what I have but attempted to defend: And that among the many Obligations your Country hath to you, for the *Wisdom* and *Diligence* of your Endeavours in its service; your *Ingenious Industry* for the Detecting of those *Vile Practicers*,
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is not the least *considerable*. To which I will add no more, but the *Confession* who it is that hath given you all this trouble; which I know you are ready to *pardon*, to the respect and good *Intentions* of

S I R,

Your Affectionate and Obligated

Honourer and Servant,

J. G.

